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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the state of mass media course requirements relative to secondary school social studies teacher certification, and assessed the university level secondary education department chairpersons' attitudes towards mass media education in general for 190 undergraduate secondary education departments. Slightly more than 95 percent of the teacher education departments surveyed did not require a course in mass media for secondary school social studies certification; it is hypothesized that this is a primary factor in the underpreparation of secondary school teachers to effectively instruct mass media classes. Results of the survey are presented in tabular form, and a copy of the instrument used is included. (LH)

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AN ANALYSIS OF MASS MEDIA REQUIREMENTS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES CERTIFICATION AND ATTITUDES OF SECONDARY EDUCATION CHAIRPERSONS TOWARD THESE REQUIREMENTS AND MASS MEDIA EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

It is a well known fact that the dominant source of information for most people are the mass media.[1] That they play a significant role in personality development is axiomatic. Numerous research studies suggest that mass media influence a person's thinking, attitudes and behavior.

Realizing the critical role of mass media in the current technological era and in political, economic and social affairs, educators have developed a variety of mass media course offerings for the secondary school curriculum. It seems, however, that in offering various mass media courses secondary schools face two rather serious problems: (1)it is extremely difficult to find academically qualified instructors for the courses, and, (2)it has been difficult to prepare adequate course content.

In a national survey on the state of mass communication* courses in secondary schools, it was found that, "the instructors of existing mass media courses are in many instances not academically or professionally prepared to teach mass communication classes."[3] Additionally, they found that in existing mass communication courses the content of newspapers and television is emphasized, but those of other media(e.g. radio, magazines, films)are not.[4] Finally, they

* mass communication and mass media are interchangeable terms in this study.

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Does your department require a student to take a course(s) in mass media as part of the requirement for secondary school social studies certification?

   _____YES _____NO

2. If you answered "YES" to the above question, please answer the following. Which of the following course(s) is required?

   _____Introduction(Survey)to Mass Media(Mass Communication).
   _____Mass Media(Mass Communication)and Society.
   _____Effects(Impact) of Mass Media(Mass Communication).
   _____Introduction to Journalism.
   _____Other(Please specify below)
   _____
   _____

3. Do you personally believe that a secondary education student in social studies should be required to take at least a course in mass media introduction at the college level.

   _____YES _____NO _____I DO NOT KNOW

4. Do you personally believe that a course in mass media should be offered as part of the secondary school social studies curriculum?

   _____YES _____NO _____I DO NOT KNOW

5. If you answered YES to question #4, please answer the following. Please list five most important aspects of mass media that you think a secondary school mass media course should emphasize.

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

6. Please answer the following.

   a. Your age: _____20s _____30s _____40s _____50s _____60s

   b. Your sex: _____Female _____Male

found that "important effects of mass media content are ignored, probably because of the instructor's lack of specialized training."[5]

This study attempted to: (1)investigate the state of mass media course requirements relative to secondary school social studies certification; and, (2)assess university level secondary education department chairperson's attitudes toward mass media education.

Research Procedures

A single page questionnaire(Page 2), designed for the study, and a cover letter were mailed to chairpersons in 278 undergraduate secondary education departments throughout the United States.[6] Of the 278 mailed, 190(68.3%)were returned.

Research Results

In seeking definitive answers to the two questions posed by this study the data reported were analyzed relative to the following:

1. Mass Media Course Requirements for Secondary School Social Studies Certification.
2. Attitudes Toward Mass Media Courses for Preservice Secondary School Social Studies Teachers.
3. Attitudes Toward Mass Media Courses in the Secondary School Curriculum.
4. Contents of Secondary School Mass Media Courses.

The resulting data are based on a total return of 190 questionnaires. As stated earlier, this represents a 68.3% return.

Mass Media Course Requirements for Secondary School Social Studies Certification.

Nine(4.7%)respondents appeared to require a course in mass media as a requirement for secondary school social studies certification. More specifically, the following were required: Introduction to

Mass Communication(5); Mass Media and Society(3); and, Effects of Mass Communication(1). It is clear from these data that an appalingly small percentage of teacher education programs require any course-work in mass media for secondary school social studies certification.

Attitudes Toward Mass Media Courses for Preservice Secondary School Social Studies Teachers.

Seventy-five respondents(39.5%)agreed that students studying for secondary school social studies certification should be required to take at least one course in mass media introduction at the college level, while seventy-nine(41.5%) did not agree. The remaining thirty-six(19%)took no position on the question. Interestingly, of the seventy-five who agreed that secondary education students in social studies should be required to take at least one mass media course, 67(89%)also answered question number four in the affirmative. That is to say, they believed that a course in mass media should be a part of the secondary school social studies curriculum. Conversly, of the seventy-nine respondents who did not agree that a secondary education student in social studies should be required to take at least one mass media course at the college level, sixty-four(81%) also disagreed that a mass media course should be required in the secondary school social studies curriculum.

Attitudes Toward Mass Media Courses in the Secondary School Curriculum.

Seventy-nine respondents(41.5%)agreed that a course in mass media should be offered as a part of the social studies curriculum at the secondary school level, while seventy-four(39%)did not. The remaining thirty-seven(19.5%)offered no opinion on the subject.

Contents of Secondary School Mass Media Courses.

Seventy-three respondents(38.5%)listed five most important aspects of mass media that a secondary school mass media course should emphasize. There were a total of 271 useable responses. These responses are reported in Table I(Page 6).

Conclusions and Recommendations

It was found that slightly more than 95% of the teacher education departments surveyrd do not require a course in mass media for secondary school social studies certification. It would appear that this fact is a primary reason why so many instructors of mass media at the secondary school level are not academically or professionally prepared to teach such courses.

The results of this study clearly demonstrate that despite the increase in mass media course offerings in secondary schools, teacher education departments have neglected to adequately train teachers in this increasingly important area of the secondary school curriculum. Further, it seems clear that teacher education programs must begin to seriously consider the efficacy of requiring coursework in mass media for prospective secondary school social studies teachers.

This study also determined that approximately 40% of the respondents believe that at least one mass media course should be required for secondary social studies certification. Conversly, about the same percentage(41%)expressed the opposite point of view. Taking these figures into consideration one wonders whether there exists either a general ignorance or singular disregard for the power of mass media in everyday life.

Table I

CONTENTS OF MASS MEDIA COURSES SUGGESTED BY SECONDARY EDUCATION DEPARTMENT CHAIRPERSONS

Subjects	Frequency	Percent
1. Role, structure and/or characteristics of mass media.	40	14.8
2. Social impact(effects)of mass media.	36	13.3
3. Relationship between mass media and politics, propaganda and/or public opinion.	28	10.3
4. Role and use of mass media in instruction.	26	9.6
5. Media's effect on individual's learning, attitude, behavior and/or interpersonal communication.	23	8.5
6. Business, commercialism and advertising of media.	17	6.3
7. Legal and ethical aspects of mass media.	15	5.5
8. Mass media criticism.	14	5.2
9. Education and counseling for mass media consumer.	14	5.2
10. Nature, process, bias of news or news presentation.	12	4.4
11. Radio and TV production techniques.	10	3.7
12. How to use audio-visual equipment for instruction.	8	2.9
13. Journalism(newswriting, editing skills and principlrs).	6	2.2
14. Theory and research methods in mass communication.	6	2.2
15. Others(photography, new technologies, international and intercultural communication, future of mass media, career in mass media, etc.).	16	5.9
TOTAL	271	100.0

Regarding mass media course content, respondents emphasized the media's social and educational role, the impact of media, their structural characteristics including news presentation processes and certain consumer-oriented subjects. The particularly strong emphasis on the effects of mass media and their instructional and educational role seems to suggest an appropriate avenue for the development of mass media course content at the secondary school level.

In light of the data generated by this study, the following recommendations seem appropriate. Given the significant impact of mass media on everyday life, it is essential that students become more aware of the effects and educational role of the mass media. This may be accompolished by offering secondary school students appropriate opportunities to study mass media at introductory or survey levels. Further, it is vitally important to provide academically and professionally qualified teachers for these course offerings. This may be accompolished by secondary education departments taking a more active role in the mass media education of their students.

Mass communication educators must bear a heavy responsibility in advocating and supporting interdisciplinary interaction between themselves and teacher educators for the purpose of promoting a deeper understanding of mass media. For without this interaction secondary school teachers will continue to be ill prepared to assist their students in learning how to cope with the effects of mass media on their lives.

FOOTNOTES

1
See: Public Perception of Television and Other Mass Media: A Twenty-Year Review, 1959-1978, A Report by the Roper Organization Inc., Television Information Office, New York, 1979, pp. 2-4.

2
See: Melvin DeFleur and Sandra Ball-Rokeach. Theories of Mass Communication, 3rd edition. (New York: David McKay Co., 1975); Wilbur Schramm and Donald Roberts, eds., The Process and Effects of Mass Communication, revised edition. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974).; Donald Shaw and Maxwell McCombs. The Emergence of American Political Issues: An Agenda-Setting Function of the Press. (St. Paul: West Publishing Co., 1977).; Joseph Klapper. The Effects of Mass Communication, (New York: The Free Press, 1960); W. PHillips Davison, James Boylan and Frederick T.C. Yu. Mass Media Systems and Effects, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1976).

3
James Fletcher and Stuart Surlin, Mass Communication Instruction in the Secondary School (Urbana: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, 1978), p. 22.

4
Ibid. p. 22.

5
Ibid. p. 23.

6
The source of our subjects was Education Directory, Colleges and Universities, 1977-1978, National Center for Education Statistics, United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1978.

7
A panel of three judges(the researchers and a senior student in mass communication reviewed all answers to this question and classified them.